MEGAFORM: A Frame of Opposition

By

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B.S. Business Administration, Concentration Finance, Fordham University, 2000

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The city is no more, only an endless urban corridor remains. As our cities have grown outwards over
the past 100 years civic identity has been destroyed and the public realm has been lost. Inexpensive
land values, the widespread adoption of the internal combustion automobile, government subsidies
and propaganda have resulted in a homogenized and privatized city with no identifiable center or
clearly defined boundaries. How might one establish identifiable civic landmarks in these conditions?
How could a novel technology, such as the electric vehicle be employed to bring about an alternative
urban reality?

To address these questions this project interrogates the typological concepts of the Urban Core and
the Megaform. Through historical and typological research this thesis establishes a lineage of both of
these concepts and then speculates about the ability of these models to influence the city.

This thesis proposes 2 novel models an Urban Core type and a Megaformal Urban Wall Building type.
The Urban Wall Building typology creates an interiorized urban realm where a linear public promenade
facilitates a new urban landscape that is best described by its radicalized sectional experience. This
type is a piece of the larger urban core typology that strategically clips out a piece the urban fabric
to define a space of opposition, civitas and ultimately, Metropolitan Urbanity. Through the design
of enclosure types, overpass infrastructures and a novel public terrain, this project questions the
potentialities for an architecture and urbanism of the electric vehicle.

In the following pages you will find a proposal that addresses the chaos of the city through the
projection of the Megaform into today’s cityscape. Through the development of the Megaform as a
recognizable entity this thesis speculates about the future of the city and the potential of Architecture
to redefine it.
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References
• **Acupuncture** - 1: an originally Chinese practice of inserting fine needles through the skin at specific points especially to cure disease or relieve pain (as in surgery)
• **Aggression** - 1: a forceful action or procedure (as an unprovoked attack) especially when intended to dominate or master. 2: the practice of making attacks or encroachments; especially: unprovoked violation by one country of the territorial integrity of another. 3: hostile, injurious, or destructive behavior or outlook especially when caused by
DESIGN PROPOSAL:
A Frame of Opposition

- **frustration**

- **Amorphous** - 1 a: having no definite form: shapeless. 2: having no real or apparent crystalline form

- **Banding** - 1 The act of ordering a field through the imposition of a series of strips 2 Marking of the body as is customary in tribal or aboriginal cultures

- **Beacon** - 1: a signal fire commonly on a hill, tower, or pole. 2 a: a lighthouse or other signal for guidance b: a radio
Megaform as Urban Nexus: An Alternative Metropolitan Reality

The Scene:

The chaos of the contemporary city, a dark and infinite plane can best described as a type of “Generic City” where a relentless continuity of strip malls and suburban developments establishes disorientation and apathy deep within its inhabitants. Where is the architecture of the city? How has our urban environment devolved into a naked landscape of universal chain stores and cookie cutter McMansions? The city is no more. Our only alternatives are division, isolation, destruction, inequality and aggression: Architectural Warfare at the grandest scale.

The Project:

This project proposes the construction of a simple wall, an “Urban Frame”, to demarcate the boundaries of an island, built for the preservation and cultivation of metropolitan culture. We as Architects must call for a retreat and concentration within these frames of resistance, yielding the rest of the urban plane to enemy forces. To divide the city into those within and those without will establish a center for opposition to the mass homogeneization and privatization of the city. These islands of culture will float on a sea of feculence and decay until (if) a time comes when the area outside the walls can be regenerated.

We as Architects must accept the futility of the architectural building to affect change in the city and should instead speculate about an urban building that is between the scale of an urban plan and an anomalous structure. As a vehicle of typological investigation this project utilizes the Megaform, a contemporary model of J.L. Sert’s Urban Core concept. As the city has exploded out across the landscape over the past 100 years urban designers and architects have speculated about strategies to organize this new condition: the endless urban plane. The “Core” project has been refined and developed by a series of great thinkers: Le Corbusier, J.L. Sert, Ludvico Quaroni, Vittorio Gregotti, Rem Koolhaas, Manuel de Sola Morales et al. As the project evolved, Kenneth Frampton identified a new type of Urban Core, the Megaform.

This project introduces the Megaform to the American Heartland, the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, to imagine a new urban reality. This novel construct is based on two primary drivers: 1. The desire to create a platform for the preservation and cultivation of Metropolitan Culture. 2. The ambition to create an interiorized urban realm that integrates the novel technology of the electric vehicle.

“How can man withdraw himself from the fields?...Quite simple, he will mark off a portion of the field by means of walls, which set up an enclosed space against amorphous, limitless space. Here you have the public square.” - Josep Lluís Sert
The Contemporary City: An Endless Continuum of Homogeneous Shit

Evolution of the Modern City and Beyond
The contemporary city is a product of the technological, cultural and political revolutions that took place during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The use of mass production to manufacture everything from automobiles to single family homes saw the commodification of these objects and their transformation into cultural status symbols. Through both corporate and government sponsored propaganda, the American Dream was fabricated to induce large scale expansion of the cities and economies of the United States and other developed nations.

As cities spread outward along major highways and other autoroutes, urban centers were thrown into a slow decline. Some theorists saw this decline as a major issue, some like Frank Lloyd Wright championed sprawl, while still others, architects such as CIAM 8 conference members J.L. Sert, Le Corbusier et. al. began to speculate on alternative models for the city. These models primarily sought to address the issues of density, the downtown or “Heart of the City”, continuity of the urban fabric and the creation of public spaces for formal and spontaneous civic assembly.

The fragmentation that these models sought to respond to can best be described by a series of figure-ground drawings of downtown areas from the early 20th century until today. The image (above left) represents downtown Detroit in 1922 and again in 1965. This type of transformation took place all over the United States during the past 100 years as automobile use grew exponentially and middle class workers moved out to the suburbs. The majority of the open space seen in figure 1 is paved automobile parking, once believed to be a sign of progress due to its anticipated development, as described in “Lots of Parking: Land Use in a Car Culture”. This belief slowly faded as many downtowns in places such as Detroit never saw their redevelopment.

Another influence on the horizontal growth of cities was the widely held belief that the highly dense

2 Jose Luis Sert, J. Tyrwhitt, E.N. Rogers, The Heart of the City, (Lund Humphries, London (1952)

transmitter emitting signals for guidance of aircraft. 3 : a source of light or inspiration
• Bind - 1 a : to make secure by tying b : to confine, restrain, or restrict as if with bonds c : to put under an obligation d : to constrain with legal authority. 2 a : to wrap around with something so as to enclose or cover b : bandage
• Canopy - 1 a : a cloth covering suspended over a bed b : a cover (as of cloth) fixed or carried above a person of high
“The city is no longer concentrated around a single centre, and instead there is a continuous movement between different focal points...the areas of sprawl are no longer peripheral, but have become poles of attraction in their own right.” - Xaveer de Geyter

rank or a sacred object : baldachin c : a protective covering: as (1) : the uppermost spreading branchy layer of a forest (2) : awning, marquee . 2 : an ornamental rooflike structure. 3 a : the transparent enclosure over an airplane cockpit b : the fabric part of a parachute that catches the air

- **Chaos** - 1 obsolete : chasm, abyss. 2 a often capitalized : a state of things in which chance is supreme. 3 a : a state of utter confusion

- **Change** - 1 a : to make different in some particular : alter. 2 a : to replace with another
19th century city promoted low productivity, poor hygiene, promiscuity and criminal behavior. This understanding of the city was both a product of the Victorian era and the result of work by writers and photographers in the U.S. and Europe who began to document the terrible conditions of the working class as a way to bring about social change. In Figure 2. the photographer Margaret Michaelis, argues that density and disorder in the city causes many of these issues. Architect J.L. Sert recognized the power of these types of images to persuade the public and he later used a selection of them in the book, “Can Our Cities Survive?”

As the public’s understanding of the city began to shift, so to did its desire to live outside the city. The aspiration to own a home that was in the countryside and commute into the city to work was based on the desire of the bourgeois class to emulate the landed gentry. As the amount of bourgeois living in the suburbs increased, so to did the desire of middle and working-class families to follow them.

These groups were to Frank Lloyd Wright “indentured servants” due to their inability to own land in the city. Wright cited land ownership as the foundation upon which society could provide upward mobility for its citizens. As a model of this thinking Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broad Acre City consisted of every man having a plot of land and a home upon it. He championed the horizontal growth of cities and foresaw a blanket or tapestry of humankind spreading out over the landscape. This low density dream would unfortunately become a reality during the 50’s and 60’s as “Levittown’s” began to spring up in the country side all around cities in the United States.

The design of developments such as Levittown and the growth of single use land zoning was also greatly influenced by Ebeneezer Howard’s “Garden Cities of Tomorrow” model. The untrained designer influenced the creation of New Towns that sprung up all over Great Britain during the early 20th century. These suburban towns in turn had an impact on the design of new developments on the periphery of American cities. The most significant impact though was brought about by one technological advancement: mass production of the automobile in the 1920’s.

As auto use grew as a means of transportation, especially after World War II, the percentage of the population that lived in the suburbs began to grow dramatically. The construction of freeways, parkways and highways, as made possible by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, popularly known

Figure 2 - Our Cities by Maraget Michaelis

1. IDENTIFY SITE BOUNDARY = DESIGNATED DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AREA

2. ID EXISTING BUILT STRUCTURES BY TYPE

3. BOUND SITE EXCLUDE:
   A. RESIDENTIAL = LOW DENSITY + PRIVATE
   B. CIVIC = SPACES WORK CURRENTLY; EMPHASIZE CITY SQUARE
   C. DEMOLISH COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS ALONG VAN DYKE

4. IMPOSE STRICT INTERNAL GEOMETRIC ORDER - GRID (A LA FRENCH GARDEN)

KEY:
- COMMERCIAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- PUBLIC/CIVIC
- UNBUILT


Warren, Michigan:

- A city of six-square miles, consisting of 1 square mile super-blocks, where residential suburban neighborhoods are ringed by commercial strip malls, Ruby Tuesday’s and Liquor Stores.
- Similar to most of South East Michigan this city takes pride in its connection with the American automobile industry, it is the home of the GM technical center, and factories for Chrysler, Ford and Dodge. Citizens regularly celebrate car culture by attending car shows, car races and other automobile-centric events.
- Warren is lacking in cultural and demographic diversity, this city was once the “ whitest” large city in America with over 99.5% of residents being Caucasian (1970 Wikipedia).
- Mass transportation infrastructure is extremely limited, buses run once an hour and there is no commuter train service.
- In terms of density the average F.A.R. is 0.3 and programmatic diversity is very low due to land use zoning restrictions.¹

as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act\(^5\), connected the periphery and urban centers. These projects were boons for the horizontal expansion of the city, but they came at the expense of the physical and psychological barriers created between existing and new neighborhoods and towns. The development and growth of the city over the past 100 years has been a subject of broad debate amongst theorists. As the city has expanded and mutated, theorists have attempted to alter their models to better describe the complexities of our cities.

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- **Container of Metropolitan Culture** - 1: A form that holds and mixes the elements of various programmatic and cultural phenomena
- **Cityness** - 1: defined by opposition...if this is so then there is a conflict today between cityness – appearance of dense shared space and urbanization – the territorial consumption made out of individual dwellings. The restoration of the city can only be done by contraction and retrenchment in to clearly articulated, bounded and dense territories.
Fragments + Landmarks

Industrial Corridor through central Warren, MI

LANDMARKS = SUPERFRAGMENTS

1. VAN ALLEN FURNITURE DISTRIBUTION

2. ZONE OF INTERVENTION

3. GM TECHNICAL CENTER

4. TACOM - U.S. ARMY

5. CHRYSLER MANUFACTURING + STAMPING

6. GM TRANSMISSION CENTER

The fragment is the opposite of the cut. The fragment is a concept of the part, whereas the cut conveys an idea of sequence, of experience, of temporal continuity in spatial discontinuity. - Manuel de Sola Morales, Designing Cities

OBJECT IN SPACE = NO PLACE

CLEARLY DEMARCATED BORDER = PLACE
• **Cosmic** - 1 a: of or relating to the cosmos, the extraterrestrial vastness, or the universe in contrast to the earth alone  
   b: of, relating to, or concerned with abstract spiritual or metaphysical ideas. 2: characterized by greatness especially in extent, intensity, or comprehensiveness

• **Cut** - 1 a: to penetrate with or as if with an edged instrument b: to hurt the feelings of c: to strike sharply with a cutting effect. 2 a: trim, pare. b: to shorten by omissions c: dilute, adulterate d: to reduce in amount. 3 a: mow,
CENTRAL WARREN - SITE PLAN

1. SITE + DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT ZONE
2. CITY HALL
3. MAIN BUILDING (GM TECH CENTER)
4. TECH PLAZA (STRIP MALL)
5. VAN DYKE ROAD
The Endless City

As the city grows and expands some architects and urbanists describe the conditions and the change that they see before them with great accuracy. These theorists can be both objective and speculative, mapping and writing about the physical and psychological shifts that have taken place and continue to alter the terrain of the city today. Based on the concepts that these philosophers, writers and thinkers espouse, an image of the city is formed. This project utilizes this “image” as a platform from which to launch a speculative urban intervention.

As a decision making device for where these interventions should take place a logical choice would be areas of greatest existing population and high growth areas. For these two reasons the periphery of the historical city provides a plethora of zones of interest. According to cultural demographer Joel Garreau, the Washington D.C. suburb, “Fairfax County, Virginia, is more populous than either Washington D.C., or San Francisco. Ninety-two percent of the people living in the New York metropolitan area do not live in Manhattan.” Alternatively when one considers high growth areas, job growth is a most accurate measure of where people are moving. Again, Mr. Garreau points out that to compare growth of American cities one should consider the differences between downtown urban centers and “Edge Cities”, the term he coined for the endless periphery of the old city. This comparison yields the somewhat surprising results that “Edge City is almost always more populous.” These areas may be growing at an explosive rate, but how are they created and defined formally and culturally.

In his book, “The Image of the City,” cultural critic, Deyan Sudjic portrays the contemporary city as an amorphous entity that “lack(s) definition.” To him cities can be portrayed through statistics that are configurable to suit any specific argument. For example, cities, such as Milan have a population of anywhere from “1.6 million to 4 million,” inhabitants based on the boundaries that one prescribes. Later in the Image of the City he describes how the mental map of Parisians has been distorted and extended to include all of the regions surrounding the historical city, based on the connectivity of transportation systems. One can travel from a new town on one side of Paris “to the shopping malls of Les Halles in less than twenty minutes, and on to the other new towns on the far side of the city without changing (train) platforms.” He argues that this completely transforms the “mental map”

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7 Garreau, Joel, Edge City: Life on the New Frontier
8 Sudjic, Deyan. The Image of the City (pp.295-304), The Hundred-Mile City (pp.305-309) in: The 100-Mile City. (New York, London, San Diego: Harcourt

• opinion. b : an instance or cause of disagreement
• Excise - 1 : to cut; to remove by or as if by excision
• Fragment - 1 : a part broken off, detached, or incomplete
• Frame - 1 : to construct by fitting and uniting the parts of the skeleton. 2 a : plan, contrive. b : shape, construct c : to give expression to : formulate d : to draw up (as a document). 3 : to enclose in a frame
“The street has become residue, organizational device, mere segment of the continuous metropolitan plane where the remnants of the past face the equipments of the new in an uneasy standoff. Bigness can exist anywhere on that plane.”
- Rem Koolhaas
that Parisians have of their city. As such, cities and urban regions have been transformed by the connectivity of high speed rail, commuter trains, subways and autoroutes. This transformation is also due to the ever shifting infrastructural and architectural landscape.

The homogeneity and absence of “Architecture” in the contemporary city is the product of “Urbanization” as Pier Vittorio Aureli et. al of the Berlage Institute specifically define it. In the book, Brussels - A Manifesto: Towards a New Capital of Europe, they state, “The city has come to be seen as in a biological state constantly in flux, empty of political intention or objective purpose... prisoners to the predicament of the free market, we find ourselves uninvolved in the name of consensus — and in a bind that immobilizes our ability to decide.” This apathy, and for some disgust, with the suburban porridge that surrounds, connects and consumes our cities creates a zone which many architects and urbanists would rather avoid. Another architect and urban designer who portrays the landscape as a zone that lacks difference, but also presents opportunity is Manuel de Sola Morales.


ENGLISH GARDEN

ENGLISH GARDEN: AN ARTIFICIAL RECREATION OF THE “NATURAL LANDSCAPE”

English Garden Principles:
1. Landscape consists of gently rolling ground
2. Paths follow a sinuous stream, route or other “topography”
3. A series of Viewpoints or vistas are established along the path
4. Classical or Gothic follies that serve as points of focus for visitors
5. Trees, plants and bushes that focus viewing frames
6. A connection is established with the surrounding countryside via the Ha-Ha device.
7. A “Natural” environment is artificially constructed for pleasurable and/or political purposes


Difference - 1 a : the quality or state of being different. b : an instance of differing in nature, form, or quality. c archaic : a characteristic that distinguishes one from another or from
SITE STRATEGY: INTERPRETATION + INVERSION

The Jeffersonian Grid is ever present in the Southeastern Corridor of Michigan and throughout the American midwest. As an organizational device it was derived from Thomas Jefferson’s admiration for the French style of gardening. This approach visually emphasizes the dominance of man over nature through the strict imposition of geometric order, as can be seen at Versailles, the Tuileries et al. Alternatively, the English garden which developed later as a formal response, focuses on the development of a “ramble” or winding path in an artificially “natural” landscape. The path with its series of vistas and distant follies allows for man to meditate on the beauty of nature. The first suburban single family home developments and their subsequent imitations were heavily influenced by the English garden movement. Derivative forms of both of these precedents, the English and French garden are important elements of the contemporary city.

Warren Michigan is exactly 6 square-miles grided into 6 rows of 1 square-mile superblocks. Each

FRENCH GARDEN

1. Boundary established - hedge, wall, change of elevation creates separation.
2. Partnerre - viewing platform allows for bird's eye vista.
3. Hedge delimits bosquet boundary.
4. Alies run perpendicular to main axis.
5. Main axis - east/west or south orientation.
6. Allees run perpendicular to main axis.
7. Hedge delimits bosquet boundary.
8. Allées run perpendicular to main axis.
9. Main axis - east/west or south orientation.
10. Boundary established - hedge, wall, change of elevation creates separation.

French Garden Principles:
1. Pleasure and decorative gardens near the chateau; utilitarian gardens at a distance.
2. Gardens are divided into open spaces and wooded spaces.
3. Organized along a main symmetrical axis.
4. The axis is bisected by transversal allées.
5. An “architecture of greenery” is formed where walls of plants and shrubs are integrated with porticoes, arbors and alcoves.
6. Inside the bosquets, formed by the allées, compartments of greenery are square, round or multi-sided.
7. Statuary is woven into the green space network for the promotion of political and social ideals.
8. Water elements play a role in emphasizing accents and the creation of great fountains.

SOURCE: THE FRENCH GARDEN, 1500-1800, WILLIAM HOWARD ADAMS, PUBLISHER: GEORGE BRAZILLER, NEW YORK 1979
The model that Manuel presents is at once sobering and inspiring:

The lack of difference in the contemporary built terrain makes a periphery of vertiginous landscapes, where both activity and construction are always weaker than the bare spaces within which they appear. Neither repetition nor difference in the Deleuzian sense have occupied it.\(^{10}\)

The emptiness and homogeneity that he describes captures the essence of today's city. His description also proposes that the built and programmed space is weaker than the space in-between or as he later refers to it the “Interesting Distance.” This space to him is a zone of opportunity where in the future new types of infrastructure and urban design will transform the city. This idea is an influential factor in the formulation of the zone of intervention for the proposed project. As de Morales saw meaningful places of interest, so to does the author imagine these spaces of overwhelming opportunity to restructure and redefine the city.

An author that has redefined the city through his writing and building, Rem Koolhaas, describes in his “Generic City” essay a city that represents late-capitalist culture and a public domain void of a human presence.

The serenity of the Generic City is achieved by the evacuation of the public realm, as in an emergency fire drill....The urban plane now only accommodates necessary movement, fundamentally the car; highways, a superior version of boulevards and plazas, taking more and more space.\(^{11}\)

In Koolhaas' city the public realm is empty and urban space has come to be dominated by automobile infrastructure. An evacuated public realm that only accommodates required movement, the city has become a sea of anti-architecture at the service of circulation to and from nowhere. Again, where can an architectural or urban intervention influence and generate new possibilities for “the urban” within this field? Later in the essay Mr. Koolhaas notes:

The exterior of the city is no longer a collective theater where “it” happens; there’s no collective “it” left. The street has become residue...(a) mere segment of the continuous metropolitan plane where the remnants of the past face the equipments of the new in an uneasy standoff.\(^{12}\)

If the existing street is mere “residue,” a new terrain must be imagined to transform the traditional


\(^{12}\) Koolhaas, Rem. Bigness or the Problem of the Large. (pp. 495-516) in: S,M,L,XL (Rotterdam: 010Publishers, 1995)
of these superblocks contains a mixture of programmatic types, but they are mostly dominated by suburban single family home developments inspired by the English garden. This project interprets the Warren superblock as the French garden containing the English garden. As an inversion of this condition the footprint and organization of the project is based on the formal concept of the English garden containing the French garden. The intention of this maneuver is to create an oppositional relationship with the surrounding landscape. The establishment of formal difference creates a moment of order in the chaos of the city and a recognizable civic landmark.

“The origin of architecture is not the primitive hut, but the marking of ground, to establish a cosmic order around the surrounding chaos of nature.”
- Vittorio Gregotti
notion. Only in this way can a new urbanism be created and a new type of city defined. As the street is no longer an influential element, the question remains what is?

Urbanization, is a term employed by a variety of architects to describe the driving force of sprawl: the endless private developments that consist of single family dwellings and strip malls. In the essay “Whatever Happened to Urbanism,” Rem writes, “Pervasive urbanization has modified the urban condition itself beyond recognition....As the concept of city is distorted and stretched beyond precedent, each insistence on its primordial condition – in terms of images, rules, fabrication – irrevocably leads via nostalgia to irrelevance.” As the rules have been obliterated, along with the relevance of the traditional city an opportunity presents itself when one considers the future. How can one define the city in a way that presents a powerful platform from which to launch a meaningful intervention in the city? For this one should consider the writings of Pier Aureli et al.

Cityness is defined by opposition...if this is so then there is a conflict today between cityness — appearance of dense shared space and urbanization — the territorial consumption made out of individual dwellings. The restoration of the city can only be done by contraction and retrenchment in to clearly articulated, bounded and dense territories.13

The statement above constructs the foundation upon which the urban proposition for the project is constructed. The necessity of opposition, whether it be class, demographics, ethnicity, programmatic, circulatory whatever, constitutes a major requisite to create a “Metropolitan Island” within the low density single use sprawl. The combination of not only functions, but also types of employment and people allows for the mixite that “Cityness” requires. The requirement of “dense shared space” described also articulates the necessary ingredients for a way to reinvent the city. The objective of this project is not to “mend” the city or “restore” it to its traditional form, but to project a potential way forward.

13 Aureli, Pier et al. Brussels Manifesto: Towards a New Capital of Europe

“The force of the peripheral place lies in the void between disconnected objects.”
- Manuel de Sola-Morales

the average. d : the element or factor that separates or distinguishes contrasting situations. 2 : distinction or discrimination in preference. 3 a : disagreement in opinion. b : an instance or cause of disagreement
- Excise - 1 : to cut; to remove by or as if by excision
- F.A.R. - 1 : The arithmetic relationship of the total square feet of a building to the square footage of the land area. The floor-area ratio is often limited by the zoning code and may have an important influence on the land value. Fragment -
SITE STRATEGY: **URBAN EXCISION**

1. **IDENTIFY SITE BOUNDARY** = DESIGNATED DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AREA

   - KEY: BOUNDARY

2. **ID EXISTING BUILT STRUCTURES BY TYPE**

   - KEY:
     - COMMERCIAL
     - RESIDENTIAL
     - PUBLIC/CIVIC
     - UNBUILT

3. **BOUND SITE**

   - EXCLUDE:
     - A. RESIDENTIAL = LOW DENSITY + PRIVATE
     - B. CIVIC = SPACES WORK CURRENTLY; EMPHASIZE CITY SQUARE
     - C. DEMOLISH COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS ALONG VAN DYKE

4. **IMPOSE STRICT INTERNAL GEOMETRIC ORDER - GRID**

   - (A LA FRENCH GARDEN)

---

**SITEMAP + STRATEGY**

**SITE FLOWS**

**WARREN MICHIGAN**
DESIGN RESEARCH:  
The Urban Core

1: a part broken off, detached, or incomplete

- **Frame** - 1: to construct by fitting and uniting the parts of the skeleton. 2 a: plan, contrive. b: shape, construct c: to give expression to: formulate d: to draw up (as a document). 3: to enclose in a frame

- **Incision** - 1: a: cut, gash; specifically: a wound made especially in surgery by incising the body b: a marginal notch (as in a leaf). 2: an act of incising something. 3: the quality or state of being incisive
DESIGN PROPOSAL:
A Frame of Opposition

- **Incubator** - 1: one that incubates: as a: an apparatus by which eggs are hatched artificially b: an apparatus with a chamber used to provide controlled environmental conditions especially for the cultivation of microorganisms or the care and protection of premature or sick babies c: an organization or place that aids the development of new business ventures especially by providing low-cost commercial space, management assistance, or shared services.
- **Incite** - 1: to move to action: stir up: spur on: urge on
As a method for structuring a new type of city, the late-Modern concept of a constellation of Urban Cores cast across the existing terrain is a valuable precedent. As the city exploded out across the landscape following World War II, Jacqueline Tyrwhitt built upon the concept of dispersed urban nuclei. Her essay “Constellation of Cores” first published as part of the CIAM 8 conference, describes a system of urban nuclei that are based on contextual and ideological considerations. She determines that the “scale-levels” of each Core should be based upon the variations of “density of development”: “topography”, “degree of industrialization” and “social habits” of the populous. Her concept was formally influenced, at the regional scale, by Ebeneezer Howard’s “Garden Cities” nodal network of New Towns and her mentor Patrick Geddes’ concept of a series of villages dotting the rural landscape as a means for disurbanization. In direct contrast with Geddes’ theory of disurbanization, Tyrwhitt’s concept, is a proposal that creates a recentralization into a net of polynuclear cores.

As Tyrwhitt writes about this constellation of cores, J.L. Sert consents that “Each part of the city needs to have its own center or nucleus, and the system as a whole results in a network or constellation of community centers.” While his mainland European background and his milieu, keep Sert locked into an outdated belief that the center of the city must remain the focus of these networks, Tyrwhitt disagrees. Instead of a center, she believes that these networks will continue out over the landscape with a “series of several related centers.” As a model of an urban polynuclear field the work of Walter Christaller closely mirrors some of Tyrwhitt’s observations.

The Central Place Theory developed by Christaller and first devised in 1933, is an abstract model that describes settlement patterns...
**DESIGN STRATEGIES: A NEW DOWNTOWN TYPOLOGY**

The fragmented nature of Warren results in an endless field condition. This condition is only interrupted by extremely large factory buildings embedded in the fabric, which serve as landmarks. These landmarks are primarily utilized for the assembly of automobiles. These factories surrounded by vast “green” and “grey” buffer zones are to be considered superfragments. The study of these superfragments yields the recognition of the necessity for Bigness as a means to influence the city. This project inverts the superfragment to frame a space within. This void is a civic space which sets up an oppositional relationship with the surrounding sprawlscape. Furthermore, the factory assembly line informs the linear footprint of the building and serves as an anchor for the Urban Core program.

“The public square is....simply the negation of the fields. It is a portion of the countryside that turns its back on the rest and sets up an opposition to it.”

- Ortega y Gasset

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**INVERT THE FRAGMENT**

OBJECT IN SPACE = NO PLACE

CLEARLY DEMARCATED BORDER = PLACE
based on the distribution and production of goods and services. He first demonstrated this model through the mapping of small villages and towns in southern Germany. The model is based on “thresholds” and “ranges”, thresholds are the minimum population size needed to bring about the selling of a particular good or service, while ranges involve the maximum distance a consumer is willing to travel to acquire said good\textsuperscript{16}. The theory is best illustrated by Figure 4 (pg 30. bottom left), which is an original drawing of the Central Place Theory. CPM, can be described as a scientific model that has been influential in a variety of fields, but most importantly economics, geography and urban design. This theory and Tyrwhitt’s “Constellation of Cores” proposal articulate significant models for the organization of our low density sprawl cities.

### The Urban Core - Complexes for Metropolitan Urbanity

An ideal model for a “Central” place within Walter Christaller’s theory is the Urban Core. As a prototype for urban growth, the concept of the Core evolved out of the early work of Le Corbusier and J.L. Sert. After Sert and Corb parted ways, during their Bogota urban design disagreement (1947), Sert continued to carry on with the concept and eventually to found the department of Urban Design at Harvard University in 1959. So why do we need Urban Cores today and what did these early protagonists see as the future of the city?

Initial models of the urban core were created to revitalize historic downtowns and to create “New

\textbf{SUBURBAN SHIT} \hspace{2cm} \textbf{ISLAND OF METROPOLITAN CULTURE}

The megaform maybe identified as an urban nexus set within the ‘space-endlessness’ of the megalopolis.”
- Kenneth Frampton
Towns.” After World War II, the flight of residents and jobs to the suburbs drove down real estate values and began a long decline of traditional city centers. These models were seen as solutions to decaying central cities. Many derivatives of the Urban Core models have been spawned by the likes of Victor Gruen, et al. some of these became the shopping malls and nostalgic “city” experiences of places like the Mall of America in Minnesota and South Street Seaport in New York City. These are perversions of the initial idea to better suit capitalist needs and are in many regards anti-urban.

The use of retail as a driving element for an urban core is in direct opposition to the pithy of the idea, which involves a main public space that would be surrounded by transit, civic and some retail spaces. Sert described his concept of the urban core as being composed of civic administration, public buildings, transportation hubs, natural elements, a contrast in scales for structures and the separation of automobile and pedestrian circulation. This model is based on his liberal philosophy of the city and what he saw as a need for a place that stood in opposition to the “tyranny of the masses” a concept of philosopher Ortega y Gasset.

Throughout Sert’s career Gasset was extremely influential on his political and cultural biases. Both Sert’s and Gasset’s beliefs were a result of their exposure to the rise of Fascism in their native country of Spain. Fascism to Gasset was a result of the masses asserting their power, mob rule and bringing about political change that was in direct opposition to the idea of a liberal democracy. He believed that a liberal democracy required a space where opposing viewpoints could be discussed, a forum of ideas could be created that would lead to a productive public debate. This concept, Gasset and other liberal philosophers such as Isiah Berlin believed is the key to maintaining a truly democratic political system. The ideal of a liberal public sphere is essentially intertwined with Richard Sennett’s concept of Metropolitan Urbanity.

The cultural sociologist, Richard Sennett’s studies of urban consciousness and public space in the city led him to a definition of primary ideals of the city. He precisely delineated this in his 1994 speech at the School of Architecture, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, “What I think of as urbaniy is precisely making use of the density and differences in the city...To me, how to privilege the notion of

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18 Ortega Y Gasset, José. The Coming of the Masses (pp.11-18), The Greatest Danger, the State (pp.115-124), and excerpt from Who Rules in the World (pp.150-153), in: The Revolt of the Masses. Authorized translation from the Spanish. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., Publishers, c1932).

• **Industrial** - 1 : of or relating to industry. 2 : derived from human industry. 3 : engaged in industry
• **Infinite** - 1 : extending indefinitely : endless. 2 : immeasurably or inconceivably great or extensive : inexhaustible. 3 : subject to no limitation or external determination. 4 a : extending beyond, lying beyond, or being greater than any preassigned finite value however large
• **Inflect** - 1 : to turn from a direct line or course : curve. 2 : to vary (a word) by inflection : decline, conjugate. 3 : to
CONTAINERS OF PROGRAMMATIC INSTABILITY

The horizontal bands that are imposed on the site serve as “containers” of program. This flexible system recognizes the dynamic nature of programmatic instability. The main anchors of the complex are the electric vehicle assembly line and research zones in the Production container, the Exhibition container for sustainable automobile culture and the Civic container for public gatherings and debate.

“Through contamination rather than purity and quantity, rather than quality, only Bigness can support genuinely new relationships between functional entities that expand rather than limit their identities.” - Rem Koolhaas
difference that is what urbanity is all about. As such, the organization and assembly of difference to Sennett should be a main objective of urban design. These characteristics are important to Rem Koolhaas as well. This is made apparent in many of OMA’s projects but particularly so in the Parc de la Villette competition entry. A key element of Metropolitan Urbanity and of this project is how programmatic instability or change is fostered and contained in a way that it can “contaminate” its neighbors. In the project a series of programmatic strips are artificially imposed upon the site. The objective of formally banding the site is to assemble adjacent programmatic containers of maximum difference which in turn fosters cross-contamination and instability.

Change, difference and density are to Koolhaas the fundamental characteristics of urbanity. He goes
**TEMPORAL ACCESS:** PARKING + PUBLIC/PRIVATE ZONES

Access to the complex is based on the automobile needs of each programmatic type. As the volume increases in one sector it decreases in another. In this way parking and public/private access is organized and controlled on the site. For example, on weekdays parking on the roof of the Residential container is open to the public and after 5pm this area becomes restricted to residential use.

**WEEKDAY AUTO VOLUME: PER SECTOR**

**WEEKEND AUTO VOLUME: PER SECTOR**

change or vary the pitch of (as the voice). 4 : to affect or alter noticeably : influence

- **Interesting Distance** - 1: The residual space of the contemporary city. The buffer zones, off-ramps, no-mans lands, dead-cat space, “negative space.” 2 : positive separation between multiple objects – as in the Suprematists, Mondrian, etc.

- **Island** - 1 : a tract of land surrounded by water and smaller than a continent. 2 : something resembling an island
on to relate the floors of the Delirious New York skyscraper to the programmatic bands across the Parc de la Villette site.

the bands across the site were like the floors of the tower, each program different and autonomous, but modified and “polluted” through the proximity of all others. Their existence was unstable as any regime would want to make them. The only “stability” was offered by the natural elements - the rows of trees and the round forest...\(^\text{20}\)

An organization of unstable programmatic containers in close proximity for Parc de la Villette introduces change and spontaneity. This strategy mimics in many ways the spontaneity and informality of the contemporary city itself. This informality allows for the creation of a microcosm of “cityness” within a confined space. This organizational approach can be employed to define a city quarter or field condition. It can also provide a dynamic organizational system that can systematize and inform large scale urban buildings.

The Urban Core concept as defined by J.L. Sert was intentionally ambiguous. His objective was to allow for the cultural and contextual elements of the surrounding city to inform each Core. Also important is the idea of the Core as a microcosm of urbanity. One place where the ideals of democracy and culture could be organized in such a way as to foster a public space that would provide identity for the people and place. The Core is also meant to serve as an arena in which to spend leisure time and be educated upon matters of the arts and sciences. These fundamental values are still relevant today in the midst of our contemporary consumerist culture and the chaotic sprawl cities which this culture has spawned.

\(^{20}\) Koolhaas, Rem. Elegy for the Vacant Lot (pp. 937) in: S.M.L.XL (Rotterdam: 010Publishers, 1995) especially in its isolated or surrounded position: as a : a usually raised area within a thoroughfare, parking lot, or driveway used especially to separate or direct traffic b : a superstructure on the deck of a ship (as an aircraft carrier) c : a kitchen counter that is approachable from all sides. 3 : an isolated group or area; especially : an isolated ethnological group

• **Isolation** - 1 : the action of isolating; the condition of being isolated; see solitude
• **Landmark** - 1: an object (as a stone or tree) that marks the boundary of land. 2 a: a conspicuous object on land that marks a locality b: an anatomical structure used as a point of orientation in locating other structures. 3: an event or development that marks a turning point or a stage. 4: a structure (as a building) of unusual historical and usually aesthetic interest; especially: one that is officially designated and set aside for preservation

• **Landscape** - 1 a: a picture representing a view of natural inland scenery. 2 a: the landforms of a region in the
aggregate b: a portion of territory that can be viewed at one time from one place

- **Lobotomy** - 1: surgical severance of nerve fibers connecting the frontal lobes to the thalamus performed especially formerly for the relief of some mental disorders

- **Mark** - 1 a: to fix or trace out the bounds or limits of 2 a: to plot the course of: chart b: to set apart by or as if by a line or boundary

**DESIGN RESEARCH:**
The Megaform
DESIGN PROPOSAL:
A Frame of Opposition

- **Megaform** - 1: identified as an urban nexus set within the ‘space-endlessness’ of the megalopolis.
- **Megalopolis** - 1: a continuous urban corridor. 2: the agglomeration of multiple metropolitan areas
- **Metropolitan** - 1: the primate of an ecclesiastical province. 2: one who lives in a metropolis or displays metropolitan manners or customs.
- **Mixite** - 1: le diversité de la cite 2: French (casual) meaning diversity or marked by difference
Megaform - The Crystallization of Urbanity

A Formal Lineage

The concept of the Megaform, first articulated by Kenneth Frampton in his Harvard University GSD Wallenberg lecture (1999), can best be described as “an urban nexus set within the space-endlessness of the megalopolis.” In the lecture Frampton identifies a set of rules for identifying the megaform and its historical precedents. Overall the lecture establishes the Megaform as a viable way for architects to enact meaningful change upon the urban landscape.

For Frampton the context required for the Megaform is the contemporary city. The “dissolution of the city as a bounded domain,” had been acknowledged as early as the mid-19th century. Because of this he posits that architects have “been aware that any contribution they might make to urban form would be of necessity extremely limited.” As a project Frampton speculates that similar to Sert’s Urban Core, a collaboration between architects, landscape architects, urban planners and civil engineers is necessary to bring about change in the today’s city.

A megaform can be defined as:

1. A **LARGE FORM** extending **HORIZONTALLY** rather than vertically.
2. A **COMPLEX** form, which unlike the megastructure, is not necessarily articulated into a series of structural and mechanical subsets.
3. A form capable of **INFLECTING** the existing urban landscape as found because of its strong topographical character.
4. A form that is not freestanding but rather **INSINUATES** itself as a continuation of the surrounding topography.
5. A form that is oriented towards **DENSIFICATION** of the urban fabric.
6. A form that contains more than one type of program.
7. A size greater than one **MANHATTAN BLOCK** or 900 feet long and 250 feet wide.

Kenneth Frampton - Original (1999)
John T Pugh - Additional Rules (2009)

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- **Nexus** - 1: connection, link; also: a causal link. 2: a connected group or series. 3: center, focus
- **Opposition** - 1: a configuration in which one celestial body is opposite another (as the sun) in the sky or in which the elongation is near or equal to 180 degrees. 2: hostile or contrary action or condition.
DESIGN PROJECT: A MEGAFORM FOR 2020 + BEYOND
Examples of these “anthrogeographic landmarks” are:

- **Prototype** - 1: an original model on which something is patterned; archetype. 2: an individual that exhibits the essential features of a later type. 3: a standard or typical example. 4: a first full-scale and usually functional form of a new type or design of a construction (as an airplane)

- **Periphery as Project** - 1: The periphery is not only suggestive as a discontinuous reference to the compact urbanity, but specially as provocative for what has not yet been done and has to be done, a good place for intervention of urban
“.....Megaform - as an element which due to its size, content and direction has the capacity to inflect the surrounding landscape and give it a particular orientation and identity......I believe that such forms are capable of returning us to a time when the prime object of architecture was not the proliferation of freestanding objects but rather the marking of ground.” - Kenneth Frampton

forms and types.

- **Pluralism** - 1: the holding of two or more offices or positions (as benefices) at the same time. 2: the quality or state of being plural. 3 a: a theory that there are more than one or more than two kinds of ultimate reality b: a theory that reality is composed of a plurality of entities. 4 a: a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional culture or
The Great Wall of China, Qin Shi Huang 221 BC and successors.

Urban Wall Building: 1st Floor
Scale 1cm = 40m

Detail of Electric Vehicle Factory on page 49
Urban Wall Building: 2nd Floor
Recreational Landscape
Scale 1cm = 40m
Urban Wall Building: 3rd Floor
Public Promenade + Electric Vehicle Research + Development
Scale 1cm = 40m
Urban Wall Building:
Roof + 4th Floor
Parking
Scale 1cm = 40m
Left: 1st Floor Van Dyke Electric Vehicle Factory

Below: Van Dyke Factory Detail
Continued...Sequence of Sections through Public Promenade
Detail:
3rd Floor
Vertical Access +
Public Promenade
"Today's self-referential and narcissistic structures that are emblems of the market - "Iconic Building" - we should instead propose large scale architectural installations, punctual, limited and simple large-scale urban forms - topographic acupuncture with a big needle."

Pier Aureli et al.; Brussels Manifesto

Retrenchment - 1 a. an act or instance of resisting; opposition b. a means of resisting; remove resist. 3: an opposing or retarding force. 4 a. the opposition offered by a body or substance to the passage through...
“Bigness is the last bastion of architecture—a contraction, a hyper-architecture. The containers of Bigness will be landmarks in a post-architectural landscape—a world scraped of architecture.”
- Rem Koolhaas
west elevation: civic plaza entrance
“Dimension – the project’s bigness is both literal and phenomenological…. the urban project must be the crucible within which its original datum – the form of the city – is borne out.’.”

- Pier Aureli et al.; Brussels Manifesto


Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium, Fumihiko Maki. Tokyo, Japan 1990.
“The issue is that we are in a society that promotes pluralism and working by consensus, but architectural form is the result of absolute decision making.”
- Pier Aureli et al.; Berlage Institute


Shenzhen Bao’an Airport, Jesse Reiser + Umemoto Shenzhen, China 2008.
Above: Typical Residential Cross Section

- **Revolt** - 1: to renounce allegiance or subjection (as to a government): rebel. 2 a: to experience disgust or shock b: to turn away with disgust
- **Schism** - 1: division, separation; also: discord, disharmony. 2 a: formal division in or separation from a church or religious body b: the offense of promoting schism
The enclosure of the 3 mile long Megaform is a Solar Collection Canopy system that creates a massive solar array in the city, which can both enclose this new type of urbanism and power it. The current configuration of translucent solar film, opaque and transparent panels can generate up to **19.8 MegaWatts** and if a system of purely translucent solar collecting panels were to be deployed up to 64 MegaWatts would be possible during peak times of the day and year.

Below: Solar Canopy Facade - Closed

Below: Solar Canopy Facade - Open

**Passive Temperature Control**

**SUMMER COOLING**

**WINTER HEATING**

**3 MILE LONG CONCRETE HEAT SINK**
SPACES ON THE FIRST AND THIRD FLOOR ARE PROGRAMMED BASED ON THE ZONE IN WHICH THEY ARE LOCATED. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPACES ON THE FIRST AND THIRD FLOOR RELATE IN SUCH A WAY THAT ONE EXPERIENCES THE BUILDING AS A SEQUENCE OF DIFFERENCE AND PROGRAMMATIC VARIETY.

THE ENCLOSURE OF THE 3 MILE LONG MEGAFORM IS A SOLAR CANOPY SYSTEM THAT CREATES A MASSIVE SOLAR ARRAY IN THE CITY, WHICH CAN GENERATE UP TO 19.8 MEGAWATTS AND IF A SYSTEM OF PURELY TRANSLUCENT PANELS CAN GENERATE UP TO 64 MEGAWATTS. THROUGH THE PROLIFERATION OF THIS RELATIONSHIP URBAN SPRAWL CAN BE REDUCED AND POLYCENTRIC CORES AND BE ESTABLISHED.

WIDESPREAD ADOPTION OF THE ELECTRIC AUTOMOBILE WILL ALLOW FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW TYPES OF URBAN CONDITIONS. THIS TYPE OF MOBILITY GIVES OFF NO CARBON DIOXIDE OR NOISE POLLUTION WHICH WILL FACILITATE NEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HUMANS, AUTOMOBILES, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE CITY.

THE INFILL SYSTEM WILL ESTABLISH “SOFT” BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC OR SEMI-PUBLIC DOMAINS. THE PAVILLION TYPE IS ALSO EMPLOYED TO INFILL THE FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK OF THIS NEW TYPOLOGICAL SYSTEM.

THE CANOPY ALLOWS SUNLIGHT INTO THE BUILDING, WHILE ALSO COLLECTING SOLAR ENERGY. THE MAX SOLAR ENERGY COLLECTION AT 13% EFFICIENCY IS 64 MEGAWATTS. THE CANOPY PASSIVELY HEATS AND COOLS THE INTERNAL STREET SYSTEM THROUGH A TEMPERATURE REGULATED SYSTEM THAT OPENS AND CLOSES WINDOWS. OVERNIGHT DURING THE SUMMER TIME NIGHT “FLUSHING” OCCURS AND DURING THE WINTER THE CANOPY REMAINS CLOSED TO RETAIN HEAT.

PARKING ON THE ROOF OF THE STRUCTURE CREATES A VERTICAL URBAN CONDITION. THE ROOF PARKING CREATES A NEW URBAN EXPERIENCE WHERE VISITORS AND RESIDENTS DRIVE THROUGH THE BUILDING UP TO THE ROOF PARK, THEN CIRCULATE DOWN INTO THE BUILDING THROUGH THE PROLIFERATION OF THIS RELATIONSHIP URBAN CAN BE REDUCED AND POLYCENTRIC CORES CAN BE ESTABLISHED.

THE RECREATIONAL LANDSCAPE SUPPORTS BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC NEEDS. AN INTERIOR PARK SYSTEM THAT CREATES A NEW TYPE OF PUBLIC-TERRAIN AND AMENITY RESIDENTS, THEN TRAVEL INTO THE EXTERIOR SPACE TO RECYCLE ENERGY AND ENJOY CERTAIN TIMES OF DAY SECTORS CAN BE DESIGNATED FOR PRIVATE RESIDENT USES AND OTHER PUBLIC FUNCTIONS.

Canopy Enclosure

Solar Canopy Facade

Electric Automobile

Infill Parti-Wall System

Highway Overpass Infrastructure

Programmatic Banding

Recreational Landscape

Urban Wall Building Typology Organization
The historical lineage is clear, the Megaform project is an extension of J.L. Sert’s Urban Core idea. This is significant because they are both based on the importance of an identifiable civic space and the necessity of an urban scale. Other important characteristics include: a formal presence in the field condition of today’s city, public space with a civic quality, a combination of programmatic types, a bounded figure, a form that both informs and is informed by its context. The ability to place each idea in a timeline allows for one to recognize their historical place.

The concept of the Urban Core, was mostly developed after World War II. The further development of the core idea by the likes of Ludvico Quaroni, Vittorio Greggotti and J.L. Sert after the widespread disillusionment with Functional Modernism further enriched the idea. Similarly the Megaform concept, identified by Frampton in 1999, comes at a time of disillusionment with Post-Modernism and nostalgic “New Urban” interventions. Both of these historical milieus were tumultuous times of expansion and loss for the city. These visionaries recognized the necessity for dense, urban nodes within the ever-expanding field of sprawl.

Within the field of the sprawl city another primary characteristic of the Megaform concept is its size. The necessity of “Bigness” for architecture to make an impact in today’s endless city was recognized by J.L. Sert in his early studies. Also, the Late-Modernist Ludvico Quaroni’s project for the new Government Center in Tunis (1965) asserts its presence into the existing city, but does so with a certain respect for the context as it steps down in both its transversal and long sections. This project, at its center forms a massive civic square which creates a certain public face for the city. The grand central void of the project is thoughtfully connected with the surrounding city, not with Hausmanian boulevards but with a series of smaller scale streets that speak to the context of the city.

Quaroni labeled his conceptual framework, “The Grid and Emergences.” Within a field of urban fabric, he holds that it is necessary for Emergences or urban monuments to give order to the city. These “Emergences” serve as landmarks in the “spontaneous” chaos of sprawl. In his conversation with Manuel Sola Morales, Quaroni discusses the necessity of these landmarks to create space not necessarily through their height, but through their sheer size. This project and others of its time serve as a reference to the necessity of the large scale Urban Core project, as they were both powerful and contextual.
The development of the concept of bigness continues with Rem Koolhaas and his seminal essay, “Bigness: Or the Problem of the Large.” In this text he formulates a series of ideas that concern the future of architecture and its relationship with the city. The size of a project is of great significance because of the vast amount of “negative space” within the contemporary city. Bigness is necessary, he argues to re-establish urbanity in an interiorized version, due to the fact that the exterior street itself has become mere “residue.”23 The sheer size of a project can also serve to combine program in a way that creates opportunities for the dynamic reinvention of relationships due to proximity and economic necessity.

Massive projects allow for one to consider structures as removed from a form/function relationship due to the complexities that “Bigness” can contain. This is clearly demonstrated in OMA’s Congrexpo project, part of their Lille Masterplan completed in 199424. In this project the facade could geometrically be anything, due to its massive scale it serves simply as a container for program. Again, this provides a release from the form follows function Modernist ideologies because of its sheer size. The result is, “a model of programmatic alchemy.”

As remarked upon previously opposition, as defined by Aureli is the basis for urbanity. In Rem’s “Bigness” essay he remarks on how, “Bigness no longer needs the city….it is the city.” To employ a large scale structure in the contemporary city is to preempt the city, to compete with it. This oppositional relationship, not only organizes an internal urban order, but an external one as well defined by its oppositional relations with its context. How does it establish itself as a landmark in the field of the city? It does so by its difference, not only its internal order, but also its negation of the surrounding landscape. Through its size it resists the endless landscape and orders it.

The opportunity to organize the landscape, is denoted by Xaveer de Geyter in his research study, “After Sprawl.”25 In this study and Manuel de Sola Morales’ “Periphery as Project,” the authors recognize the latency within residual space. Their studies ask the question, “This is the condition of city today, how do we begin to operate in it in a meaningful way?” As the focal points of the city dynamically shift about in the periphery one realizes the value of the residual space. There is no longer a center and a periphery, but one open field with nodes of density and difference. De Geyter recognizes the residual “free land” of this field, between infrastructure, industrial zones and private developments as

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method : a clever stratagem b : the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a goal
• **Suburban Porridge** - 1 The vast undefined and amorphous territory of the contemporary city. 2 The Shit
• **Stimulate** - 1 : to excite to activity or growth or to greater activity : animate, arouse. 2 a : to function as a physiological stimulus to b : to arouse or affect by a stimulant (as a drug)
• **Symbol** - 1 : an authoritative summary of faith or doctrine : creed. 2 : something that stands for or suggests
Van Dyke Perspective Driving North through the Urban Core complex
“negative space,” space that is not normally designed or planned. In this space lies opportunity for the megaform to organize new poles of urbanity.

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Below: Aerial view looking North
“We are faced with an ‘a-criticality’ in regard to the suburbs/periphery due to the acceptance of any fragmentary item because it is such....The force of the peripheral place lies in the void between disconnected objects.” - Manuel de Sola-Morales
A Brief Analysis of Alternatives

Alternatives to the Urban Core and Megaform concepts claim to address the issues of decentralization and the loss of public space in the city. Unfortunately, many of these harken back to an earlier time in an attempt to recreate the traditional city square through historic and typological symbols and references. One of these groups, the “New Urbanists” mainly create anti-urban, sequestered, private developments that feel more like Disneyland than a new urban realm. Furthermore, “New Urban” designs deny the social and cultural import of the automobile, by hiding it in back alleys. The city street and the urban realm are fundamentally dependent on the automobile for the flow of humans and cars to activate it.

Other groups, such as the Smart Growth movement address issues of density and mass transportation through a series of written rules and regulations. This approach is admirable, but ultimately does not generate civic identity or a metropolitan culture because of their reliance on retail and private development. Another example of the privatized “urban experience” are the shopping malls of Victor Gruen et al. which are an example of the Urban Core concept perverted to serve our consumer society. These agglomerations are a sanitized condensation of the contemporary urban realm, which consists of a series a homogenous private developments. Unfortunately like the contemporary urban relam, these models exclude two fundamental elements of “Cityness”: civic space and the assembly of difference both functionally and demographically. This leaves visitors with a space of pure consumption. All of these alternatives lack the ability to generate a beacon of civic identity and ultimately do not create a space for “urbanity” in endless corridors of the megalopolis.

- Urban - 1 : of, relating to, characteristic of, or constituting a city
- Urbanization - As defined by the Brussels Manifesto: the territorial consumption made out of individual dwellings
- Urban Courtyard (Room) - 1 : An area 1/2 square mile or larger that is contained by some structure or enclosure, with an open air space in the middle
- Xenophobia - 1 : fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign
Conclusion

The vast continuum of today’s contemporary city has been well documented. The time has come to cast-off the reluctance and doubt that architects have felt since the decline of the Modern Urban project. Research performed by architects, urbanists, anthropologists, philosophers and other thinkers have clearly defined the chaotic condition of the city today. It is now time to act.

As J.L. Sert et al. defined the Urban Core project during the 1950’s, we too should pick up the mantle for Modernism’s influence in Urban Design today. The stated issues which Sert’s Urban Core addresses grow more catastrophic by the day. The urban strategies of the project must be employed in the fight to organize our sprawl cities. Through the utilization of Central Place Theory as a base model to restructure and reconceive our cities the polynuclear urban network will become a reality.

The need for dedicated spaces for public, civic and cultural functions is now more dire than ever. Cityness is defined by opposition and the assembly of difference both socially and formally. The trend to isolate demographic groups into social enclaves creates a false reality, where “the revival of untruth, of myth, of false assumptions, of brainwashing and scapegoating,” breeds. As our cities have spread out and decentralized they have not only become functionally segregated but also socially separate. The Urban Cores will fight these anti-urban plagues through the creation of public facilities for all men, women and children. The monumentality of form and space inherent to these models will create true feelings of civitas and facilitate the integration of contemporary cultural and social needs.

As a continuation of the Urban Core project, Kenneth Frampton’s megaform concept crystallizes the idea of the core in a series of contemporary examples. The Megaform’s dual sided relationship with its context, as both fabric and monument allows for the creation of place in a manner that is sensitive and meaningful. This Design project has been a typological investigation of the potentialities of the Urban Core and Megaformal building. As the megaform creates an “urban nexus in the space endlessness of the metropolis,” this project speculates about the future of this type and its potential for imagining a new Urban reality.

As our cities grow ever more chaotic each day, the Urban Core concept awaits re-engagement and action. The culmination of the Core in the Megaform provides a vehicle to affect significant change and organize the infinite sprawl of today’s metropolis.

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If the city = chaos + urban cores order the city + megaform = contemporary urban core
-> use the megaform to order the city
APPENDIX:
A Frame of Opposition
Warren, Michigan: Images of the City
Michigan Left Turn

Warren Center
Somewhere in the periphery

Towards Wayne State University : Detroit, MI
Demolition of Tiger Stadium

Neighborhood near old Tiger Stadium
Warren, MI : 8 Mile Road
Warren, MI: Van Dyke Road

Detroit, MI: Traffic
Warren, MI : Van Dyke Road + Downtown Development Area

Warren, MI : Tech Plaza
Warren, MI: Stunted Development
Detroit, MI: Abandoned Train Station Grand Entrance

Detroit, MI: Abandoned Train Station
Denise Bilinski - Model Citizen

“I’ve lived here since the 80’s when my husband and I moved here from the town over. We moved here because of his job at the Tech Center. He passed awhile back and I stayed.” - From June 14th 2009 Interview

Maria - County Economic Development

“I’ve lived here my whole life. Well I don’t live in Warren I live in Centerline, a city embedded in the center of Warren. There are some great things about the city, mostly the GM and Chrysler plants are the hearts of this town.” - From June 15th Interview
“I’m a newcomer, in fact it’s funny because it, when you look at me and my neighborhood. I’m the newcomer, my next door neighbor, move into her parents house after her mother died and she, when she moved out of her parents house, she just moved down the street and then moved back, the neighbor across the street is her aunt, who is at least in her seventies and she lives next door to the home that she grew up in.” - From June 15th 2009 Interview

“I work for the mayor to make sure the everyday details get implemented and everything is the way it should be. Previously I owned a machine shop across the city line in Detroit.” - From June 18th 2009 Interview
Warren, MI: Typical Ranch Home
Warren, MI: Typical Ranch Home

Warren, MI: Typical Two Story Home
Statistics and other Research
2009 Electric Vehicle Stimulus - USA

$US 2.4bil.

MI
$968 MIL.
41%

OR
$347 MIL.
14%

IN
$336 MIL.
14%

EDUCATION CENTERS

RESEARCH + MANUFACTURING

DEPLOYMENT CENTERS

DEPLOYMENT CENTERS

DEPLOYMENT CENTERS
2009 Electric Vehicle Stimulus - Michigan

$161m - DOW KOKAM - MIDLAND, MI

$151m - COMPACT POWER - HOLLAND, MI

$299.2m - JOHNSON CONTROLS - HOLLAND, MI

$45.4m - SC AIR QUALITY MNGMT - GALESBURG, MI

$161m - DOW KOKAM - MIDLAND, MI

$151m - COMPACT POWER - HOLLAND, MI

$299.2m - JOHNSON CONTROLS - HOLLAND, MI

$45.4m - SC AIR QUALITY MNGMT - GALESBURG, MI

$30.5m - CHRYSLER - WARREN, MI

$5m - MACOMBE CC - WARREN, MI

$5m - WAYNE STATE UNIV. EDUCATION CTR. - DETROIT, MI

$2.98m - UNIV. MICHIGAN EDUCATION CTR. - DETROIT, MI

$62m - FORD MOTOR COMPANY DRIVETRAIN - STERLING HEIGHTS, MI

$70m - CHRYSLER - WARREN, MI

$105.9m - GM BATTERY PACK PROD. - BROWNSTOWN, MI

$62.7m - FORD MOTOR COMPANY DRIVETRAIN - STERLING HEIGHTS, MI

$70m - CHRYSLER - WARREN, MI

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2. OMA - Agadir Convention Center (Competition Entry), 1990
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